

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A filter element for manufacturing tobacco smoke filters comprising:

a filtering material forming a filter element body having an outer surface and an interior portion which substantially contains starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and comprises pores and/or filter channels in the interior portion of the filter element body and being open in the direction of gas flow, the pores and/or filter channels having a diameter in a range of about 50 μm to about 100 μm ,

wherein the filtering material is arranged in alternately succeeding layers comprised of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and activated carbon and the layers are stacked transversely with respect to the direction of gas flow.

2. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 1, the ~~filtering material~~ filter element body comprising continuous filter channels in the interior portion extending substantially in the direction of the gas flow, wherein the diameter of the filter channels lies in the range of 50 μm to 100 μm .

3. (Previously Presented) The filter element according to claim 1, wherein the starch and/or the starch-based polymer mixture form(s) a base material for the activated carbon.

4. (Previously Presented) The filter element according to claim 1, wherein the starch and/or starch-based polymer mixture is a foamed material or a fibrous material.

5. (Previously Presented) The filter element according to claim 4, wherein the activated carbon is an activated-carbon powder, wherein the foamed material or the fibrous material forms a base material for the activated-carbon powder.

6. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 1, the filtering material further comprising natural fibers selected from the group consisting of cellulose fibers, hemp, and cotton fibers in an amount of ~~at least~~ about 5 percent by volume.

7. (Previously Presented) A method for manufacturing a filter element according to claim 1 comprising the steps of :

- (a) continuously supplying a metered mixture of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture as well as further additives into an extruder system,
- (b) heating and kneading the mixture at a defined temperature and pressure regime for forming a melt,
- (c) extruding the melt through a nozzle,
- (d) forming an extruded product having an air-permeable configuration
- (e) compressing the extruded product and forming a filtering material as an endless filter,
- (f) separating the extruded filtering material into portions, and
- (g) forming a filter element comprised of at least one filtering material portion.

8. (Previously Presented) A method for manufacturing a filter element according to claim 1 comprising the steps of:

- (a) continuously supplying a metered mixture of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture as well as further additives into an extruder system,
- (b) heating and kneading the mixture at a defined temperature and pressure regime for forming a melt,
- (c) extruding the melt through a nozzle,
- (d) forming an extruded product having an air-permeable configuration,
- (e) compressing the extruded product and forming a filtering material as an endless filter,
- (f) separating the extruded filtering material into portions, and
- (g) forming a filter element consisting of two or more filtering material portions and each comprising an activated carbon layer between subsequent filtering material portions.

9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 7, wherein the filter channels in the interior of the filter element body are introduced into the filtering material portions before forming the filter element.

10. (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein the filter channels are formed by water jets, needles or a laser beam.

11. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein the filtering material is formed of starch foam, a biopolymeric film or a starch polymer film.

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 7, wherein the further additives are selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl alcohol, polyester amide and/or polyester urethane, polyactic acid (PLA) (~~PLB~~), poly hydroxy butyric acid (PHB), a flowing assistant, and a foaming agent.

13. (Currently Amended) A filter element for manufacturing tobacco smoke filters comprising:

a filtering material forming a filter element body having an outer surface and an interior portion which substantially contains starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and includes a plurality of pores and/or filter channels in the interior portion of the filter element body aligned partly transversely relative to the direction of gas flow through the interior portion of the filter element body ~~filtering material~~,

wherein the filtering material is arranged in alternately succeeding layers comprised of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and activated carbon and the layers are stacked transversely with respect to the direction of gas flow.

14. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 13, wherein the filter element body further comprises pores and/or filter channels that are generally aligned in the direction of gas flow through the interior portion of the filter element body ~~filtering material~~.

15. (Previously Presented) The filter element according to claim 13, wherein the pores and/or filter channels extend all the way through the filtering material.

16. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 13, wherein the pores and/or filter channels in the interior portion of the filter element body have a diameter in a range of about 50 μm to about 100 μm .

17. (Currently Amended) A filter element for manufacturing tobacco smoke filters comprising:

a filtering material forming a filter element body having an outer surface and an interior portion which contains substantially starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and ~~at least~~ about 5% by volume of natural cellulose fibers, and which includes a plurality of pores and/or filter channels extending at least partially through the interior portion of the filter element body filtering material,

wherein the filtering material is arranged in alternately succeeding layers comprised of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and activated carbon and the layers are stacked transversely with respect to the direction of gas flow.

18. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 17, wherein the pores and/or filter channels through the interior portion of the filter element body are generally aligned in the direction of gas flow through the filtering material.

19. (Previously Presented) The filter element according to claim 17, wherein the pores and/or filter channels have a diameter in a range of about 50 μm to about 100 μm .

20. (Previously Presented) The filter element according to claim 17, wherein the natural cellulose fibers comprises at least one of cotton or hemp fibers.